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AN  
ANSWER  
TO THE *Gibson (Edmund) et*  
PLEA  
FOR  
HUMAN REASON:  
In VINDICATION OF  
The BISHOP of LONDON's  
SECOND PASTORAL LETTER.

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WHEREIN  
The AUTHOR's *Misrepresentations* and  
*Mistakes* are laid open, and his *fallacious*  
*Reasonings* confuted.

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In a LETTER to the AUTHOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT  
TO THE  
READER.

**T**HE Reader is desir'd to take Notice, that this Paper was not writ with the Bishop's Knowledge, and therefore whatever Mistakes or Defects there may happen to be in it, the Author is only accountable for them, and takes them wholly to himself.

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## ТНЕМІДЕРМІУДА

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A  
LETTER  
TO THE  
AUTHOR  
OF THE  
*Plea for Human Reason, &c.*

SIR,

**H**AVING lately read your Paper, Intitled, *A Plea for Human Reason, &c.* I cannot sufficiently express my Surprize, to see it come from one, who openly owns himself a Christian.

AFTER the pious Endeavours of that excellent Man, (against whom your Paper

B

is

is levell'd) in Defence of the Cause of our common Christianity, one would not have expected to have seen him attack'd by any one that professes the same Faith, and therefore ought to have the same Concern for it. That he should be oppos'd by Infidels, is no wonder, when he fairly enter'd the Lists against them; but to see their Cause defended by a Christian, is something strange.

HAD the Bishop happen'd to fall into a Mistake, since it was in Defence of our common Faith, one would think every Christian should over-look it, and leave his Adversaries to set him right: Or, if it were a Mistake of any Importance, it would have been prudent and friendly to have told it him in Private, that he might have corrected it himself in an Appendix, or what other way he should think proper.

But instead of this, you have made it your Busines to Expose the Bishop, as a Teacher of false Doctrine to his People; such as *destroys the Wisdom and Goodness of Providence in the Government of Mankind, and is repugnant to the Principles of Natural Religion, and to the Doctrine of the Scripture* (p. 4.)

AND

AND what is the Consequence of this, but that the People must not regard what the Bishop says; that his Arguments against Infidelity are not of force; and tho' you have taken notice but of one of them, they are at liberty to suspect the rest? And if they are inclined to Infidelity, they will do so.

WHETHER you abhor this Consequence, or not, I cannot say: I would willingly, in Charity, think you do; but it's such a Consequence as one would think you could not but foresee; and if you did, I leave you to account for it. Whatever End you had to serve by it, Christianity is not oblig'd to you for it.

I HAVE said all this upon a bare Supposition, that the Bishop had really happen'd to be mistaken, and what you represent as an Error, had been really so. But what if he should not be mistaken, but, on the contrary, you yourself have mistaken and misrepresented his Meaning, what Recompence can you make to him and his People, and indeed the whole Body of Christians, for what you have done? And yet, that you have misrepresented the Bishop and his Argument to his People (whether upon Mistake or not, I

cannot say) is so plain to every unprejudiced Reader, that I can hardly think the Bishop was understood in the Sense you oppose by any one living, beside yourself, if you did understand him so.

THE Proposition you are offended at is this, “*That Reason of itself is an insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.*”

THIS the Bishop affirm’d in his second Pastoral Letter; and if it be true in any Sense, the Bishop has not asserted what is absolutely false; and that it is true in the Sense the Bishop meant it, is as apparent as it can be made by the general Tenor of his Argument.

WHEN we read a Book, and are in doubt about the Author’s Meaning, it is but natural and fair to compare one Expression with another, and the general Drift of his Discourse.

AND had you done this by this Book of the Bishop’s, it would have been impossible for a reasonable and impartial Man to misrepresent him as you have done, as if he had spoken that as absolutely true, which he does plainly enough declare that he meant only in a qualified and respective Sense.

FOR

FOR before the Bishop enters on the Argument, does he not make a Difference between a State of Corruption and Perfection? and does he not allow the Sufficiency of Reason in the one, tho' he denies it in the other? and does he not condemn that Reasoning in his Adversaries, that because it was sufficient in a State of Purity, therefore it must be always so, how corrupt soever the World are? And does not this Reasoning manifestly grant, that it was sufficient in a State of Purity? and can the Bishop then be justly charged with saying, *That Reason is insufficient in its own Nature?* 'Tis plain he had an Eye only to the miserable State of Darkness and Ignorance Mankind had brought themselves into by Sin, and more particularly in those Ages before Christianity; and how little the most thinking Men could do towards the Discovery of Truth, and the Reformation of that great Ignorance and Corruption of Manners, he endeavours to prove by undoubted Testimonies; and if what he says be true, (that the wisest Men were ignorant of many of the most necessary Truths, and, notwithstanding all their Endeavours to reform Mankind, could do nothing towards it to any purpose; which is as true as Ten thousand Testimonies and Proofs can make it, which may be extracted from the best

Heathen

Heathen Writers, of which he has given us multitudes) one would wonder how you could say, that the Bishop has asserted what is false, when he says, *That Reason of itself alone, is not, in this State, a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion*: For this is all that he can mean by it: And it argues something very unworthy, so far to pervert his honest Meaning, as to make him affirm that of Reason in its own Nature, which is evidently spoken of Reason in those Circumstances of Ignorance and Wickedness the World was in before Revelation, and probably will be always in, where there is no Revelation.

AND if any Man will say, that this is not true, he must affirm, that the Reason of the *Hottentots* is a sufficient Guide for the Discovery of all necessary Truth, without need of any other Assistance; so that if God shall vouchsafe them the Favour of a Revelation, it's a needless Condescension to them.

THIS is evidently the Drift of the Bishop's Argument, and 'tis a melancholy Consideration to reflect upon your Behaviour towards him for this, to endeavour to expose him as you have done to his People, as if he were a false Guide, leading them into Error, for saying what all the World knows

knows to be true ; and if there be any Error in what he says, it is only in the Sense you yourself have given it, without any Colour of Reason for it.

But you'll say perhaps, that as the Bishop's Proposition is delivered in *unlimited Terms*, and as you are sure it is not true in *an unlimited Sense*, you thought it your Duty to shew him his Error, and you conceived yourself obliged, as you seem to intimate, not to see "*Human Reason depreciated, which would destroy the Wisdom and Goodness of God's Providence* (p. 4.)

THIS might be your Motive for ought I know ; but a good Man would have been sure of the Bishop's Meaning, and that he had an Intention to depreciate Reason, before he would have so openly charg'd him with it. And as for your Zeal for the Honour of God's Providence, considering you own yourself a Christian, it would have as well becom'd you, to have shewn the like Concern for the Honour of your Holy Faith : I verily believe, there's not a Man in the Kingdom was in danger of any hardi Thoughts of God from what the Bishop had said, because no Man could reasonably take him in such a Sense, as to give Occasion for such Thoughts ; and therefore there could ; alibit not be any thing in His vise be and

be no apparent Necessity for this *Plea* of yours.

But every one sees the Progress of Infidelity, how it appears open and undisguis'd, and how comes it to pass that you are so regardless of this, as not only not to lend your Aid against the Enemy, but to discharge your Artillery against those that do; nay, to fasten a false Charge upon the Bishop, on purpose that you might make yourself a Handle to lay hold of for it?

'Tis a very odd kind of Zeal in a Christian, to pretend to be so tender of the Honour of God's Providence, and yet to be so careless of that Religion he professes, as in a manner to give it up as needless: For if there was no need of Revelation, the Consequence is easy and natural, that there is none; and if, because Reason is in its own Nature a sufficient Guide, no Circumstances, as you say, could make it insufficient (p. 43.), 'tis very certain, that it was always, at all Times, in all Circumstances sufficient, and by consequence nothing else, but that, was necessary for Man, because God will do nothing in vain.

I will not say, that this is the Design of your Defence of Reason, for this would directly fall in with our modern Infidels; but

but whatever you Design by it, it naturally tends to carry on their Cause, and encourage them in their Unbelief.

NOT that there is any *just* Reason for this; for that Men may be in such Circumstances, as that Reason shall be in a manner useless to them, and therefore insufficient to help them out of them, is as certain, as that Men may be rendered so incapable of exercising their natural Powers, or so altogether indisposed to it, as if they had no such Powers: But yet, I say, your Argument tends to this, as it tends to persuade Men from the Sufficiency of Reason, to lay aside or neglect the Gospel Revelation, which is carrying on the Work of Infidelity effectually.

BUT such Tendency you pretend it cannot have, because “*to lay aside or neglect the Gospel Revelation, is to lay aside or neglect the Natural Religion and Morality, which is the Foundation, the Substance, the End of the Gospel.*”

BUT never sure was there such a Reason given by a Man of Sense: For when we speak of setting aside the Gospel Revelation, would any reasonable Man have thought, that by the Gospel Revelation, is meant the Gospel Morality? Is it not evidently

Spoken of the manner of God's making known the Things contained in the Gospel, and not the Things themselves? And tho' Men allow the Morality of the Gospel Laws, as they are the Laws of Nature, &c. yet may they not disbelieve the extraordinary Revelation of them from God? And therefore to set aside the Gospel Revelation, or, in other Words, to disbelieve the Revelation of the Gospel, will not necessarily imply, as you say very absurdly that it does, *the laying aside all Natural Religion or Morality*: The Morality of the Gospel, and the Revelation of it from God, are two different Things; and when any one is persuaded that he can be taught all Morality without the Gospel Revelation, it will be natural to conclude he has no need of it, and may be so far tempted to lay it aside.

THIS is what the Bishop affirms, and affirms with great Reason, and your Answer appears to me to be absurd.

BUT to reconcile your Notion of the Sufficiency of Reason for all the Purposes of Religion, with the Usefulness of Revelation, you tell us, *That Men may confess what was sufficient on God's Part to bring them to the Knowledge, and engage them to the Practice of true Religion and Righteousness,*

ness, in giving them a Law written in their Hearts, and yet may also thankfully acknowledge the greater and more effectual Light of the Gospel Revelation. For Christianity is the most perfect and uncorrupted Reason, free from Superstition and Immorality, and where Men have Opportunities of knowing this reveal'd Will of God, Reason will naturally lead them to receive it, and inforce the Obligation of it on them.

IN Answer to this, I do allow, and so does the Bishop too, that God gave Mankind the Faculty of Reason, which was naturally sufficient for its purpose; and had Mankind always continued perfect, and always employ'd it right, and always acted according to it, they had needed nothing more to conduct them to the End they were made for: But in this Case, I cannot see how any one could expect the Favour of a Revelation; or how Reason, as you say, could naturally lead any one to receive any pretended Revelation as coming from God, when he could have no natural Reason to believe, that the Wisdom of God would do any thing in vain. Had the Gospel Scheme of Religion been made known to a Man in such a State, he might naturally discern that it is a most perfect Draught of the Law of Nature, and as such would naturally approve of it; but he could not have

reasonably received it as a Revelation from God, meerly on that Account, unless it had appear'd to him that there was a Necessity of such a Revelation ; and if the Circumstances of the World were such as stood in need of a Revelation, 'tis plain, that bare Reason in those Circumstances could not be sufficient without that Revelation.

THIS is the Foot, as I apprehend, upon which the Bishop puts it ; and to prove this, he shews us what the Circumstances of the World were ; how they were overwhelm'd with Ignorance and Wickedness, and had their Faculties so impaired, and their Affections so corrupted, that they were incapable of knowing and acting like rational Creatures : And tho' some sagacious Wits might extricate themselves in some measure out of this Condition, by the Strength of their Parts, and the Help and Improvement of a learned Education ; yet he shews, that the Bulk of Mankind were in no likelihood of doing this to any purpose ; no, nor even the Learned themselves, as he demonstrates, by the known Ignorance there was even amongst them in some of the most important Parts of Religion and Morality. So that whatever Reason was able to do of its own Nature, it was able to do little as it was then cramp't in its natural Powers, and was disabled by Vice and worldly Prejudices :

And

And this is what he means by the Insufficiency of Reason: And in this Case, he says, 'tis a Fallacy to assert, that Reason is a sufficient Guide, because it was so at the Creation, in that pure and perfect State Mankind were made in, because the Cases are not the same. For let the Power of Reason be naturally what it will, yet as to the finding out a compleat Rule of Life, *it is much the same thing*, he says, *with regard to the Generality of the World, whether Reason be incapable of framing such a Rule, or the Generality be hindered by Pleasure, &c. from employing their Reason to frame it.* And if Reason could not help them with a compleat Rule of Life in the sad Condition the World was in, 'tis plain, they must be without such a Rule; and if such a Rule was necessary to the Happiness of Man, and they could not have it, is it not the same thing as to their having a Rule, whether this be owing to any natural or accidental Insufficiency of Reason?

THIS is the Bishop's Argument, by which, as it is evident, that he does not speak of the Insufficiency of Reason in its own Nature, but only of an accidental Insufficiency arising from the Depravation of the World, by which they had render'd Reason useless to them, through their own Fault; so the Fact

Fact is undeniable, and the Argument demonstrative.

But yet this must not serve his turn, but you will have him mean what you think fit, that you may have an Opportunity of shewing your good Regard to the Bishop, on the one hand; but I hope not your Concern for the Cause he opposes, on the other.

AND tho' you allow yourself (p. 7.) that the World was in such a Condition, as to stand in "need of more Light to lead them into the Paths of that Reason which they had darkened and forsaken thro' their wilful Transgression of God's Laws, manifested to them by the Light of Nature, and stronger Motives to inforce it, than meer Reason could propose," which is a plain Confession, that in that Condition Reason was not sufficient for them; yet, tho' the Bishop says nothing more, and aims at nothing more, by asserting the Insufficiency of Human Reason than this, yet this is an Error, and false Doctrine in him, and destructive of the Wisdom and Goodness of God's Providence.

THIS is very hard Treatment from a Christian, but let us see what you have to say.

IN the first place you observe, that what the Bishop had said of Reason in a State of Innocence, and the Fallacy, as you call it, of Reasoning from thence, to the present corrupt State of Human Nature, *will do him no Good.*

BUT, I pray, what Good did the Bishop expect from saying that? And what was the Use he said it for, but only to shew, that, tho' Reason was perfect and sufficient for Human Nature at first, in that pure and uncorrupted State, it will not thence follow, that it will be always so in the present corrupted State of Things? And as he intended by this to tell us what he meant by the Insufficiency of Reason, and that there is no Parallel between the two States, he has all the Good he aim'd at by it so far.

BUT the Reason you give for what you say here, that this will stand the Bishop in little stead, is very strange? It is, as far as I can apprehend you, that there was never such a State of Innocence, as the Bishop speaks of, but that our first Parents were prone to be as corrupt as any other of their Posterity, and that Reason is as sufficient for all the World as it was for them, which I take to be a great Absurdity, and directly

contrary

contrary to the Scripture History : For whereas you say, that our first Parents had *a Proneness of Appetite to be Inordinate*, that is, I suppose, to disobey God, the Scripture says no such thing, but the contrary, as it says, they were *made very good*. And tho' you say, *this appears by their yielding to the first Temptation to transgress God's Law*; yet this is no Proof, nor Appearance of it : For the Scripture represents them as *seduced into Sin*, and not carried to it by *any Proneness of Appetite*, but *beguil'd by Subtily*.

BUT let this be as it will, if there was any such Proneness in our first Parents to Sin, then we must not say, that they were made upright and in a perfect State; but they must be allow'd (in Inclination at least) to be corrupt from the Beginning, and their Reason must have been as weak, as that of their Posterity since : Now, tho' this is absurd enough, I will not trouble myself about it, because 'tis nothing to the purpose : It is enough for the Bishop, that he had another Opinion of them, and thought them in a State of Purity and Perfection, and that their Reason was sufficient in that State, tho' it was not so afterwards, when their Posterity became more corrupt : This, I say, is enough to shew the Bishop's Meaning, when he speaks of the Insufficiency

cien<sup>cy</sup> of Reason; that he did not speak it of Reason in its own Nature, as God made it, but as it was in the corrupt State of Mankind only. This I conceive to be the End he aimed at in it, and 'tis an undeniable Proof of this his Meaning; and therefore that when you represent him, as speaking otherwise, 'tis an evident perverting of his Intention; an Act that is no Commendation to any Cause.

ANOTHER thing you object against the Bishop is, that he thinks it a fallacious way of arguing, that because *Reason is our Guide in the Affairs of this Life*, it may therefore be our Guide in Religion and the Concerns of the next Life; whereas, in one it has the Assistance of Sense (to which you should have added, *Experience and Observation*, as the Bishop does) but in the other, it is left in a great measure to Conjecture and Speculation (p. 12.)

IF I understand the Bishop right, he makes the Fallacy to consist in this, that the Comparison between Religion and the Concerns of the next Life, and the Affairs of this, is not just, nor the Case the same, because the latter has the Help of Sense, Observation and Experience; the former in a great measure depends on Conjecture and Speculation.

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Now,

Now, by Religion, I suppose, he means the Notions we have of God, his Creation and Providence, and the Happiness he made us for, and the Means of attaining it; the Laws we are required to live by, with the natural Reasons of them, and our Obligation to observe them; as likewise the Certainty of a future State, and the Nature and Condition of it, which he calls the Concerns of the next Life.

Now you think it is wrong in him to say, that *these things depend in a great measure on Conjecture and Speculation*; because you conceive these things are demonstrable: And supposing they were so, are they demonstrable by all the World? and is every one as able to do it, as he is to judge of his worldly Affairs by *Sense, Observation and Experience*? And can you think that every Man can give as good and clear an Account of the Nature and Reason of these things, as he can of his Estate and worldly Interest? You know the contrary, and therefore with what Reason can you object against the Bishop for saying, that Men know better how to manage their worldly Affairs by *Sense, Observation and Experience*, than to get the Knowledge of *Religion*, and the *Concerns of another Life by Reason*, when you and all the World know it to be true?

AND

AND whereas the Bishop says, that *Religion and the Concerns of another Life, are in great measure left to Conjecture and Speculation*, is it not apparently true? Is not the notional Part of Religion merely Speculation, as it is the Object of the Understanding, and form'd only by the Operation of the Mind? And supposing it demonstrable, is it not the Work of the Intellect, and therefore Speculation? And tho' there be a great deal of the notional Part of Religion strictly demonstrable; yet, as it is certain, there is a great deal that is not so, and without all question, it is not so to the Generality of the World, is not this a sufficient Ground for the Bishop to say, in a looser Sense, that a great deal of Religion is matter of Conjecture, so far as it is wanting of absolute Certainty: But if he intends this Word, as I verily believe he does, to relate only to the *Concerns of another Life* (whatever you may pretend to demonstrate) it is very plain, that the World could never come to any Certainty about it, till Revelation set it on a certain Foot, and they never could rise higher than Conjecture concerning it, no not the learnedst Men; and how much more true is it of others, even the general Bulk of Mankind, who are known to be little capable of Reasoning at all, much less of Demonstrating any

thing, but especially things of this Nature? All that the World knew of another Life, before the Gospel brought it to Light, was meer Conjecture, and 'tis little more even now amongst Christians, who do not depend upon the Authority of the Gospel, but their weak and uncertain Reasonings only.

AND if this be true, as it is manifestly and experimentally so, it is an undeniable Proof, that Reason is not, as you say it is, so sure and infallible a Guide in Religion and the Concerns of another Life, as Sense is in the Affairs of this Life (p. 12.) For let it be as you say, that the Difference of Good and Evil, and the Obligation of natural Virtue and Piety, are as manifest to Reason, as the Objects of Sense can be to Sense, and have the Certainty of Demonstration, which the others have not; yet, unless every one can have this Certainty, and can Demonstrate these things, as every one can judge of the Objects of Sense, it is plain, they are not so manifest as the Objects of Sense are; and tho' they may be so, when they are demonstrated, yet, till they are demonstrated, they may be as dark as any other latent Truths are: And 'tis certain to Experience, that the greatest Part of Religion, is so to much the greatest Part of the World,

World, as to the Reasons and Principles on which it stands.

AND therefore, to argue, as the Bishop says, *as if all Mankind were Philosophers*, is the greatest Absurdity in the World. (By which Expression of his, as he seems to imply, that Philosophers might be capable of coming to the Knowledge of natural Religion, tho' others could not; so 'tis very strange that you should allow, as you do p. 15. *that the Bishop seems to acknowledge this*, and yet charge him, as you do, with the direct contrary to it, as if he maintain'd, that no Man's Reason was sufficient for it.) But this by the bye.

BUT however incapable the Bulk of Mankind are of Reasoning, and finding out such Truths as are necessary to be known in order to the Happiness of a Rational Creature; this is not owing, nor does the Bishop say it is owing, to any Defect in Reason in its own Nature, to find out those things that are the proper Objects of it, but only to the Change that has happened in Mankind, and the Alteration of their Circumstances from Time to Time, which has render'd them incapable of a proper Exercise of Reason, or indisposed them to attend to, or follow the Dictates of it: On the Account of which, you allow, *that they wanted*

wanted some more powerful Means of promoting the Practice of true Religion and Godliness, by strengthening the Obligations of natural Religion, by proposing that Assurance of Pardon of Sin, which mere Reason could not make certain unto Men, and for the Promise of greater Rewards hereafter, for Continuance in well-doing, than Reason alone could make known to them (p. 19.)

IN this Respect, as you allow Revelation was wanting to reform the general Corruption of Morality and natural Religion, as a more perfect Means to this Purpose, than mere Reason (p. 20.) ; so, do you not allow at the same Time, that Reason was not alone sufficient for the Reformation of Mankind under that general Corruption of Morality you speak of? And is it not very strange, that it should be a Fault, an Error, a Misleading of the People in the Bishop to say this, and at the same Time you yourself allow it to be true? And does it not plainly appear, that your whole Book is levelled against a Proposition, which the Bishop does not maintain in your Sense of it, but, according to your own Confession, seems to maintain the contrary, as you yourself have just now asserted? (p. 15.)

ANOTHER Remark you make upon the Bishop is, that he is guilty of fallacious Arguing,

Arguing, in saying, that as to the Sufficiency of Reason, to be a Guide in Religion, it is much the same thing with regard to the Generality of Mankind, whether Reason be incapable of framing a compleat Rule of Life, or the Generality be binder'd by Pleasures, &c. from employing their Reason to frame it.

THIS is fallacious you say, and you assert it is not the same thing: Because if Reason were incapable of guiding Men, they would be Excusable in their immoral Errors, &c. but Mens not employing their Reason, is quite another thing. It is their own Fault, and renders them accountable for their Neglect or Abuse of it (p. 14.)

THIS is your Argument, and such an absurd one, as I could not have thought could have dropt from a Man of your Understanding: For 'tis all nothing to the Purpose: Had the Argument been about the Guilt of not being guided by Reason; and had the Comparison been made between a Man that is not capable of Reasoning, and another, who, tho' he is capable, will not use his Reason, what you here say would have been pertinent.

BUT the Question is of quite another Nature; 'tis about the Power of Reason to form

form to itself a compleat Rule of Life: And as the Bishop makes it appear by abundant Evidence, that there was a Time when the World was in want of such a compleat Rule, the Question is how they should come by it? If they had not such a Rule, whatever the Cause was, whether the Weakness of their Reason to form such a Rule, or any Incapacity they had brought themselves under by their Attachment to the World, the Business and Pleasures of it, by which they became indisposed and hindered from a proper Exercise of their Reason for it, is all one; whichsoever of these is the Cause of their being without a Rule, *it is the same thing*, the Bishop says, *as to the Government of their Lives*, since either way they have no Rule, and are equally incapable of forming one to themselves: This is all the Bishop says, and it is as clear a Truth as ever came from the Tongue of Men, and a great Want of Judgment to call it a Fallacy; but especially upon the Reason you alledge for it, which is altogether beside the Question: And if you will apply this to the Gospel, and say, that it is the same thing to us, that have the Gospel, as if we had it not, so long as we do not live by it, whether that be owing to want of Power to Know the Gospel, or such a Neglect or Disregard of it, as that we will not be at the Pains to Read

Read it, or are so taken up with the Pleasures and Business of Life, that we will not allow our selves Time to do it: In this Respect it is plain, that to such as do so, 'tis the same thing in respect of a Rule, as if they had no such Rule, because it is to them as if they had none. But as to the forming a Rule, it is not the same to us who have the Gospel, as if we had it not, because if we had it not, we must form it for ourselves by the Exercise of our Reason, but now we have it form'd to our hands for us.

BUT, nevertheless, if Men will not be at the Pains to Know it, or will not give themselves Leisure for it, how Compleat soever it be in its own Nature, it is the same thing to them, as if they had it not: And till such Men can be brought to act otherwise, I cannot deny but the Gospel is Insufficient for their Purpose, as being intended only for reasonable Men: And tho' they cannot be said to want another Revelation, yet they do certainly want some Method of Providence or other, to awaken them into a serious Consideration of Things. And for this Purpose, God has appointed an Order of Men to be Preachers of Righteousness, and one Day in seven to be set apart for reading his Word, and explaining it to them, and drawing proper Instructions

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from it; which makes our Case different from theirs: For whom, tho' God has provided a Law and Rule in the Natures and Relations of Things, yet it was in a manner hid from them in the State they had brought themselves into, whatever was the Reason of it: And as this is all, that I conceive is meant by the Bishop, so there is nothing more manifest to common Sense.

You go on to take Notice of what the Bishop urges, in relation to the Differences there were among the Philosophers, in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment.

In Opposition to which, you say, or seem to me to say, that there were no such Differences amongst the Philosophers.

AND if there were, you affirm, that this will not prove the Insufficiency of Reason to be a Guide in Religion any more, than the like, or greater, Differences amongst Christians, will prove the Insufficiency of the Gospel; both which Assertions are false.

FIRST, you seem to say, that there were no such Differences amongst the Philosophers; but, on the contrary, that they were all a very united People, all agreeing in one consistent Scheme of Notions, which

which they all consistently and concurrently Taught, except a few *Epicurean* Atheists, and a few others of Atheistical Opinions.

W.H.A.T you mean by a *few*, I can't tell, but if you mean the whole Sect of the *Epi-cureans*, I have very great Reason to think, from what I have read of those Times, that this Sect can't be called a few, but, on the contrary, was more numerous than all the rest; not only as it was most favoured by the Wits, most countenanced by the Great, and equally encouraged by Pension from the Court; but also, as it would be naturally followed by the corrupt and debauched World.

BUT however this be, this Agreement of the Philosophers you speak of, we are, it seems, to take your Word for, in Contradiction to the Cloud of Witnessess the Bishop has produced, which are a glaring Proof to the contrary.

AND your Assertion is so far from Truth, in my Opinion, that I may boldly defy you to shew any such Scheme as you speak of, that was ever Taught by any one Sect of Philosophers, as a consistent Scheme that they all agreed in, tho' you may here and there glean up a chance Expression or two,

that may favour this or that particular Nation ; and tho' these may be tack'd together and set out as a Scheme of theirs, yet I have never met with any such regular Set of Notions Taught by any of them, and much less can it be said, that they are *concurrently Taught by all*. In one Word, if the Bishop's Quotations are true, there could be no such Scheme : And if you were able to produce the like Testimonies for what you say in Opposition to him, you would only prove by this, what the Bishop does, and every one that Reads them must observe, namely, that they contradict one another, and confirm, by your own Argument, what the Bishop undertook to prove by his, even whilst you pretend to deny the Truth of it.

BUT setting aside this ; your next Objection is, That supposing such Differences amongst the Philosophers, there are the like, and greater, Differences among Christians, and such too, as affect the very Being of Religion and Virtue, as well as those among the Philosophers did.

WHAT the Differences among the Philosophers were, the Bishop has largely shewn, that some denied the Being, others the Unity of God, others the Immortality of the Soul ; and while some asserted, that Virtue

Vertue and Vice are founded in Nature, and are Eternal and Unchangeable, it was the Doctrine of others, that nothing was Good or Evil, Just or Unjust, Right or Wrong, otherwise than as the Laws and Customs of particular Countries determin'd; while one Sect made Vertue the sole Good, and its own Reward, another Sect rejected that Notion in case of Vertue in Distress, and made the good Things of this Life, a necessary Ingredient of Happiness; and a third set up Pleasure, or, at least, Indolence and a Freedom from Pain, as the final Good that Men ought to propose to themselves.

AGAIN, one whole Sect denied a Providence; others own'd no more than a general Providence; others, that allow'd a particular Providence, extended it only to greater Matters, supposing the lesser to be neglected by it; others denied the Omnipotence of God, which was little less than a Denial of a Providence.

AND while some talk'd of their Gods taking Vengeance upon the Bad, and Rewarding the Good; others exploded the Notion of God's being pleas'd or displeas'd with any thing which wholly destroyed all Religion, and yet it is said to have been the universal Opinion of Philosophers, not only of those, who taught, that God did not concern himself in human

*human Affairs, but of those who believed he did.*

THESE were some of the Differences amongst the Philosophers, and is there any thing like this amongst Christians? *Don't all agree in the Being and Unity of God, his Creation and universal Providence, the Difference between Good and Evil, that the one is Displeasing, the other Acceptable to God, that the Soul is Immortal, and that there will be a State of future Rewards and Punishments?*

*Don't all Christians agree, That Jesus Christ was sent from God, and that his Apostles were divinely Inspired? that all Christians are obliged to profess themselves his Disciples, and to hope for Pardon, the Favour of God, and Eternal Life thro' him? That the Worship of God is to be perform'd chiefly by the Heart, in Prayers, Praises and Thanksgiving? and as to all other Points, that they are bound to Live by the Rules that Jesus Christ and his Apostles have left them in the Holy Scriptures? Don't all agree in these things?*

BUT to this you urge, that you believe there are *Atheists among Christians*, that is, there are those, that profess themselves Christians, but in reality are not so, and neither

neither believe in Christ nor God; which is no more, than to say, that there are some, that believe neither natural nor reveal'd Religion, and yet call themselves Christians: And there are others you say, that deny the Unity of the Godhead, which is a Proposition that wants a great deal of Proof; for I have never yet heard of any such: For whatever Consequences you, and others, draw from some Notions of private Men, it is not fair to charge them with your Consequences, when they professedly deny them: And tho' some notional Men may advance Opinions, which may sound harsh in the Judgment of others, and may be thought to have a Tendency to depreciate Morality, yet I believe they are very few, and those very Persons, if they be more than one, do all at the same time acknowledge their Obligation to Moral Virtue, and deny that they see any such Tendency, and all endeavour to model their Notions, so as to make them consistent with true Religion and Virtue.

As for the Doctrine of absolute and unconditionate Predestination, which you lay a great Stress upon, as if it were of the same Nature with the Philosopher's *Fate*, I am well assured is not true, because their *Fate* was such a Necessity as the very Gods themselves were subject to; but this is an

Act

Act of God, and intirely depends on his Will; and whatever Tendency the Doctrine of Fate had among Heathens, they, who hold Predestination among Christians, are so far from thinking themselves discharged by it from all Duty and Obedience to the Will of God, delivered in his Laws, that, on the contrary, they think themselves obliged to greater and more strict Obedience on the Account of their Election, and that merely out of Love and Gratitude, and they make this the Mark by which they are to judge of their Predestination to Happiness.

BUT after all, however these things be, considering the present State of Mankind, it is impossible but there must be Differences of Opinions; and so long as they all agree, as all Christians do in all the Essential Points and Duties of Christianity, they cannot be said to differ as the Philosophers did (the Disputes of Christians being, for the most part, about things not necessary).

AND tho' 'tis true, there are some material Disputes of another Nature, between Papists and Protestants, in which the latter condemn the former of Innovations and Doctrines contrary to Christianity; yet this only shews, that Christians are fallible as other People; and if any have set up Doctrines to serve their Worldly Interests, without

without Regard to the Rule they own themselves oblig'd to walk by; it only proves, that there are bad Men among Christians, as there always were, and always will be, till the great Day of Separation comes. And these Differences are to me a further Proof of the Insufficiency of Reason, as the World stands, when, notwithstanding we have an infallible Rule, yet, whenever we go off from it, and trust to our own Imaginations, we are presently at a Loss for want of Certainty, as the Philosophers have been before us.

But these Differences among Christians, are not only a Proof, that there may be weak and wicked Men amongst them, but they are, you say, *as much a Proof of the Insufficiency of the Gospel, as a Guide in Religion; as the Differences of the Philosophers were of the Insufficiency of Reason.*

But this is false, because the Case is not the same. I allow indeed, that if the Parallel be Just, the Objection is Good; that is, if the Case of the Philosophers be the same with that of the Christians, and the Differences the same, they will equally prove against the Christians what they prove against the Philosophers; and if Reason was to the Philosophers, what the Gospel is to us, so far as their Differences

prove the Insufficiency of Reason, they will equally prove the Insufficiency of the Gospel: But if they be not the same, as they manifestly are not, they do not prove what is alledged, and there is no Force in the Objection.

Now the Case of Christians is not parallel to that of Philosophers at all, as appears, in that their Differences are not the same, because Christians do not differ about any essential Point of Religion or Morality, as the Philosophers did: But not to dispute that, ~~supposing~~ they do, I do allow, I say, that this proves as much against them, as it is alledged to prove against the Philosophers. And what is it brought to prove against the Philosophers, but only this, That, as it is necessary to Religion and the Conduct of human Life, that the World have a compleat and certain Rule, as a Standard to rectify their Notions, and regulate their Practice by; and as the Philosophers, with the utmost Study and Application, could not agree on such a Rule by their Reason, as appears by their Irreconcilable Differences about those very Points of which this Rule must be compos'd; so from hence it follows, that their Reason alone, without some other Help, was not a sufficient Guide to them to form such a Rule by; and if Christians were by the same

same Reason in the same Condition, that they wanted a Rule, as the Philosophers did, and were to form it for themselves, as they were, it would likewise follow, that so far as the Differences of Christians are the same with theirs, the Christians would be as little able to form such a Rule for themselves; and their Reason, in this Case, would be as insufficient a Guide to them, as it was to the Philosophers.

BUT it is plain, that this is not the Case of Christians, for they do not want a Rule, nor are they to form one for themselves, but they have one provided for them by the Goodness of God, to supply the Defects of their Reason, and that such a one as they agree in, and submit to in all such things as are taught by it: So that thus far Christians are not concern'd in the Objection, as being intirely out of the Case.

BUT you further urge, that if the Differences of the Philosophers prove the Insufficiency of Reason, the Differences of Christians will equally prove the Insufficiency of the Gospel, whereas the Conclusion does not follow, because here also the Case is not the same, nor the Parallel just.

I ALLOW it would be true, if Reason was to the Philosophers, what the Gospel is to us, because then the Parallel would be right ; but it is not so : For the Gospel is to us, what Reason was not to them ; the Gospel is given as a compleat Rule and unerring Guide to us, but Reason never was so to the Philosophers, nor any Man living : It is not only fallible, and therefore may misguide us, but it was not intended to be a compleat Guide of itself to any one, and therefore in that Respect has no Similitude to the Gospel, as will appear by-and-by.

THE Truth is, that which stands parallel to the Gospel as a Rule and Guide, is the Natures and Relations of Things : And this is a compleat, and standing, and infallible Rule to all Men, considered as rational Creatures, as the Gospel is to us, considered as Christians.

BUT as for Reason, as you all along understand it for our rational Faculty, or the Exercise of it, this is only the Means, by which, as by an Instrument, we perceive what the Natures and Relations of Things direct us to : And therefore as Reason can be no otherwise a Guide to us, than as it is itself guided by the Natures and Relations of Things ; so by Consequence

quence it cannot be, nor could it be intended for a compleat and sufficient Guide of itself, exclusive of any thing else.

It may be said indeed to be a Guide in a secondary and subordinate Sense, as it shews us what is taught by the Natures and Relations of Things: And if it be considered abstractly for a natural or moral Power or Faculty, it may be said to be a sufficient Guide to us of itself, as the Word signifies its own Nature, because in its own Nature it is capable of discerning what is taught by the Natures and Relations of Things, and in this Sense it is a Guide to all Mankind alike, Christians as well as Heathens: For 'tis by this natural Power or Faculty, that we Christians are to come to the Knowledge of the Things reveal'd in the Gospel, as all the World are the Things reveal'd in Nature; and in respect of this secondary Guide, considered as a natural Power or Faculty only, the Case of all Mankind is the same.

But whatever Reason is in its own Nature, abstractly considered, and whatever it is able to do in that respect, it will not hence follow, that this Faculty shall be always the same in all People, and that every one's Reason shall be able to do, what Reason, considered in its own abstract

Nature,

Nature, can do. Tho' the Faculty in its own Nature is the same in all, yet it will not hence follow, that it can never be impair'd; that there never can be any Fools or Madmen, or any Persons rendered incapable of discerning the Natures and Relations of Things so clearly, as to make a right Judgment of them. And if there are such Persons as cannot discern Things clearly, and make a right Judgment of them without some other Assistance to give them better Light, and enable them to form a right Judgment, is not this a plain Proof, that there are Persons to whom their Reason of itself is not a sufficient Guide?

Now this was the Case of the Philosophers, and the Differences there were among them, are an abundant Proof of it: They are an undeniable Proof, that they did not see what was taught by Nature; And it is likewise the same with Christians, and as there are many of them, who, tho' they are rational Creatures, as other People, and tho' they have the Light of the Gospel to guide their Reason, as the Philosophers had the Light of Nature, yet they may often not be able to see so clearly what is taught by the Gospel, as to make a right Judgment of it, and the Differences among them are a Proof of this in Christians, as they were of the like Inability in the others.

But

But yet as this Weakness of Understanding and Judgment in the Philosophers, does only shew the Insufficiency of *their* Reason to be a Guide to them, and not the Insufficiency of the Rule which they had in the Natures and Relations of Things: So neither does this Weakness of Understanding and Judgment in Christians shew any thing more but the Insufficiency of *their* Reason only, and not the Insufficiency of the Rule which they have in the Gospel.

AND this I think sufficient to evince to you the Weakness and Fallacy of your Argument, which is founded, you see, on a Misrepresentation of the Case between the Philosophers and Christians, and not rightly distinguishing, in your Notion of Reason, in what respect it is a Guide to us; both which being rightly Stated, what you have said is so far from overturning what the Bishop has proved, that it more strongly and effectually confirms it.

AND as what is said upon this Head appears to be true, from hence you may see the Falshood of that Position, which you lay down, with great Assurance, as a certain Truth, *that Reason is, and always was in any State and Circumstance of Life, a sufficient Guide of itself to Mankind;* whereas it

it is evident, that it neither is, nor ever was intended to be a sufficient Guide of itself to any Man living, nor any Guide at all, but only, as it should itself be guided by the Natures and Relations of Things: So that it was given us only as a secondary or subordinate Guide under the Direction of another.

THIS, I think, has been abundantly proved; but, to make it clearer, if possible, take this following Illustration:

IT is with the Mind, as with the Body; we have a Guide to our Bodily Motions, which is Light, and we have a Faculty of Seeing, by which we perceive this Light, and make it useful to us, which, in a secondary and subordinate Sense, may be likewise said to be our Guide: But yet this Faculty is not a sufficient Guide to us of itself, but only as it is directed by the external Light, and if you take away that Light, it is no Guide at all.

AND tho' 'tis certain, that this Faculty of Seeing, considered abstractly, as a natural Power or Faculty only, is of itself, or in its own Nature, perfectly fitted to perceive the Light, and discern such Objects by the means of it, as are suited to its Nature and End; yet it is nevertheless certain,

certain, that this Faculty is not in every particular Man in this Perfection, and therefore whatever the Faculty be in itself, as a Faculty only, it is certain that Men may be in such State and Circumstances, as that their Faculty of seeing, as it is in them, may not be a sufficient Guide to them.

AND thus the Comparison will hold as to Reason.

As we are capable of Bodily Motions, so we are likewise of Rational Operations; and as we have a Guide to direct our Operations in the Natures and Relations of Things; so we have a Rational Faculty to apprehend, consider and judge of them and what they direct us to: And tho' this Faculty is a Guide to us, yet it is only subordinately; it is not so of itself, exclusive of any other Guide: but it is only so, as it is itself directed by the Light which it receives from the Natures and Relations of Things, and if it does not perceive this Light, it is no Guide at all. And tho' it's certain, that this Faculty, abstractly considered, as a natural Power or Faculty only, is in its own Nature perfectly fitted, and in that respect sufficient, to discover all such Truths as are the proper Objects of it; yet it is as certain, that this Faculty is not in this Perfection in every particular Man, and

that every Man's Reason is not sufficient for this in some Circumstances.

AND if there are Persons that are become incapable of discerning clearly, and judging rightly of the Natures and Relations of Things, 'tis plain, that in that State and Circumstance, Reason is not of itself a sufficient Guide to them, without some other Assistance.

So that as there can be nothing plainer, than the Falshood of this Position of yours on the one Hand, *that Reason of itself is, and always was, a sufficient Guide to Mankind in any Circumstance*; so there can be no clearer Proof of the Truth of the Bishop's Position on the other, *that Reason is not of itself a sufficient Guide in every State and Circumstance*: In which, as it is plain, the Bishop does not speak of Reason, considered in its own Nature, as an abstract Power or Faculty, but as it is found in particular Men; so the Instances he gives are an abundant Proof of the Truth of what he intends them for, which is to shew, that some Men, even among the Learned, have not been able to come to a perfect Knowledge of the most essential Points of Religion, by the Use of their bare Reason alone: By which it appears, that in this respect their Reason alone was not a sufficient

cient Guide to them, without some further Light and Assistance.

AND if such a perfect Knowledge of Religion was necessary, and they could not attain it by Reason, it was necessary that they have it by some other means, which is by Revelation.

You have another Objection against the Bishop for saying, that *setting aside Revelation, no one has Authority to determine at this Day, which of the Philosophers were in the Right, or which in the Wrong*; and as you say, you don't know what the Bishop means by the Word, so you seem to intimate, that there was no need of any such Authority, “because every one is able to “judge for himself, and it is, and always “was, easy to determine what Opinions are “true and false in all the main Points and “Duties of Religion.

HAD you impartially attended to the Bishop's Argument, you could not have been at a Loss in so plain a Case. By Authority, in this Case, he means an Authority to judge for others. The Bishop is representing how unable the Philosophers were to come to such a certain Rule of Truth and Righteousness, as was necessary to true Religion and Morality, and the

Reformation of the World: And he proves it by the Differences there were among them about the most essential Points that were necessary to such a Rule.

AND as such a Rule could never be settled, unless all could agree about those Points of which the Rule was to be composed; so he says, there could be no such Agreement without the Interposal of a Divine Authority to reveal such a Rule to them, to which they would all submit their Differences.

THIS, he expressly tells you, is what he means by the Word Authority (p. 42.) And as I can't but wonder after this, how you could say, you don't know what he means by it; so I do as much wonder, that you should intimate, as you plainly do, that there was no need of any such Revelation to rectify their Notions by, especially upon the Reason you alledge for it. For tho' every one has a Right to judge for himself, will this secure them from Mistakes and Diversity of Opinions? And is every one sure to judge right? and must all Men necessarily see Things in the same Light? It seems as if you thought so, because you say, "it is, and always was, "easy to determine what Opinions are true or false."

*"false in all the main Points and Duties of Religion."*

AND yet does it not appear, by the undeniable Instances the Bishop has produced to the contrary, that this Assertion is false and contrary to Fact? If it was so easy to determine in this Case, how came all those Disputes among the Learned? It is plain they did not see the Truth so easily, and yet their Disputes were about the main Points and Duties of Religion, as the Bishop shews: Nay you yourself own, that it was the Principle of the whole Sect of the Academicks (p. 25.) not to pronounce any thing *certain*, but *probable* only. And was it for nothing that they set up this Principle? If they could so easily discern the Certainty of Things, 'twas not like Philosophers, to say they were not *certain*, and to represent them otherwise than they found them to be.

IN one Word, after the Bishop had so largely and so clearly proved, *That the Philosophers were utterly ignorant of many important Points of Religion*; *That what they knew of several of others was dark, uncertain and imperfect*; *That the Differences among them were in Points of the greatest Moment*; *That they taught Doctrines*

*Doctrines which directly tend to incourage Vice and Wickedness, and maintain'd Practices of a vile and corrupt Nature; what better Evidence can we have, that these Men could not clearly discern what was right? And since we all know they were Learned Men, and had a sincere Desire of Truth, and 'tis plain they fought after it with great Application, how can any one say, that it was always easy to determine what so many Learned, Inquisitive and Diligent Men could not determine? And if the Learned Men could not determine in this Matter, how should the Ignorant and Unlearned?*

AND what must be done in such Case? If the Things that they so differ'd and disagreed about were necessary to be settled, in order to the Reformation of the World, and forming to themselves a compleat Rule, how must it be effected? By the Differences among them, it is plain, that it could not be done by the Strength of their own Reason, and therefore must be done by some Authority superior to it, to which they would agree to submit their Differences, which is the Authority of Divine Revelation; and this is what the Bishop apparently means by the Tenour of his Argument, as well as his own express Declaration, and he could

could not be understood to mean any thing else.

AND tho' you are pleased to deny the Necessity of such a Revelation, because *every one is, and always was, easily able to determine what is Right and Wrong, True and False* (p. 27.) ; yet this is a bare Assertion, without any Proof, in Contradiction to the Observation and Experience of all Mankind.

THE next Objection you make against the Bishop, relates to the Corruptions, which he speaks of, as still prevailing among the Heathens, which prove the Insufficiency of their Reason of itself to be their Guide in Matters of Religion : And as the Bishop says, that it is *in Effect a begging the Question to impute these Corruptions to an undue Use of Reason only* : You object against this, as *no more a begging the Question in this Case, than it would be to impute the like Corruptions among Christians to the undue Use of Reason only* : And then you say his Lordship does not think this a begging the Question.

WHAT my Lord thinks I do not find, nor can I pretend to know ; but if you do but consider, you'll soon see what you ought to think. For what is the Question

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in Dispute in this Case? Here are great Corruptions, and the Question is, To what Cause they are owing? And as there may be many Causes of them, is it not *in Effect to beg the Question*, to take it for granted, without any Proof, that they are owing to one of these Causes only, and to argue on that Supposition as if it had been prov'd? It is certainly so, and it would be the same in any other Case: But this is not material; that, in which the Argument is more nearly concern'd, is the Inference you draw from what the Bishop urges, which is, that *if the Corruptions he speaks of are a Proof of the Insufficiency of Reason in the Heathens, the like Corruptions among Christians are an equal Proof of the Insufficiency of the Scripture to them*: But this is an Inference absolutely False, as appears from what I have said in the like Case before.

As the Bishop had argued from the Corruptions of the Heathens to the Insufficiency of their Reason, as their Guide; so had you inferr'd from the like Cause, the like Insufficiency of Reason in the Christians, the Consequence had been just and clear: But as you put it, it is all Fallacy, built on a false Supposition, as if Reason were the same to the Heathens as the Scripture is to Christians, which I have already shewn you it is not.

REASON,

REASON, as I have before said, is the same to Christians, as it is to Heathens; it is as much a Guide to us, as it is to them; but it is not of itself alone a Guide to either, but only as it is itself guided by the Light it receives from the Natures of Things in the Heathens, and from Scripture in Christians. And when it is so weaken'd and darken'd in the Heathens, as not to discern what is right or true by the Light it receives from Nature; as this will prove the Insufficiency of their Understanding to be a Guide to them in that respect; so, in the like Case, it is the same with Christians, and is as much a Proof of the Insufficiency of their Reason to be a Guide to them, under the Direction of the Scripture, when their Understanding is not able to discern what is right and true, by the Light that is afforded it by the Scripture.

AND if the Corruptions prevailing among the Heathens, are a Proof of such Weakness or Darkness of their Understandings, the like Corruptions among Christians, if there be any such, will alike prove the Weakness or Darkness of their Understandings also: But it is Nonsense to say, that the Scripture is not a sufficient Light to us, because our Faculties are so weaken'd and darken'd as not to see it, or not to see it so

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clearly, as to be able to direct our Motions by it: As it would be alike Nonsense to say, that the Natures of Things are not a sufficient Guide to the Heathens, because their Understandings are not able to discern what that Light does naturally direct them to; and yet this is the whole of the Case.

BUT you say, that the Errors and Impieties of Heathens are as contrary to Reason, as the same Errors and Impieties of Christians are contrary to Scripture; and owing as much in one to the undue Use or Neglect of Reason, as in the other to the undue Use or Neglect of Scripture.

HERE is a great deal to be objected against this: And in the first place, here is an Ambiguity in the Word Reason, and without some Explication it is not true, that the Errors and Impieties of the Heathens are contrary to Reason.

IF you take Reason for the Natures and Relations of Things, which is what I don't remember you ever mean by it, it is certainly true, that in this Case the Errors and Impieties of the Heathens always were and are contrary to Reason.

MOR if you mean by Reason the Rational Faculty in its own Nature, and when you

you say, that those Errors and Impieties are contrary to Reason, you mean, that this Faculty will always judge them to be Errors and Impieties, when it is duly exercised in considering the Natures and Relations of Things, and duly inform'd by them ; this I likewise allow to be true.

But if Reason be meant, as in this place it ought to be meant, of this natural Faculty or Power not considered in its own abstract Nature, but as it was, or now is in those Heathens who did in Time past, or do now live in those Errors and Impieties ; it cannot be said, that they are contrary to Reason in their Case, unless it be contrary to *their* Reason, and they live in them contrary to their own Judgment and Conscience. And yet I am not satisfied that this was always the Case with the antient Heathens, or is so with any at this Day : In many Cases, no doubt, it may be thus, as there are always bad Men ; but the Corruptions in Doctrine, Worship and Practice, the Bishop speaks of in the Place you object against (p. 35.), are most of them of such a Nature, as plainly shew, that they who did, or now do live in them, did not, and do not judge them to be Errors and Impieties. For there are some of them of so horrid a Nature (such, for Instance, as *Women burning themselves with their dead*

*Husbands ; Servants offering themselves to be kill'd at the Death of their Princes ; Parents exposing their Children : To which may be added, Children killing their aged Parents, when become decrepid ; and Mothers casting their Infants from their Breasts into the Fire as a Sacrifice ; these, I say, are of so horrid a Nature) that one would think it impossible that human Kind could be capable of submitting to them, but on some mistaken Notion of Duty, or of their being acceptable to God. And they could never think this, if they were able to discern the Natures and Relations of Things, and make proper Judgments on them.*

SUCH things therefore may reasonably be imputed chiefly to a Darkness of Understanding in religious Matters : I say, in religious Matters, for let People be ever so acute in their worldly Concerns, there may be an easy Account given of their Ignorance and Stupidity in the Matters of Religion, which may arise from several Causes : And the Corruptions abovementioned are an abundant Proof of such Ignorance and Stupidity in those People among whom they are found : And by consequence they are a full Proof that such Peoples Understandings are not a sufficient Guide to them in religious Matters, when it is plain, they cannot, by the Help of them, discern such impious

impious Corruptions to be Sins ; but, on the contrary, must rather think them Duties, notwithstanding they are undeniably contradictory to the Natures and Reasons of Things.

AND if there are such Corruptions among Christians, they are a yet stronger Confirmation of the Insufficiency of Reason, when Christians are not able to discern the Impiety of them, even in the enlighten'd State that Christendom is in, above what was known among the Heathens.

REASON, in Christians, is quite another thing than it was, and is now in the dark State of Heathenism. The most knowing Heathens are forced to extract their Knowledge by a long and intricate Train of Deductions from the Natures and Relations of Things, which, in that imperfect State the World was in before Christianity, and is now in where Christianity is not known, is no easy Work for the Bulk of Mankind : And we find this by daily Experience, when they are to make out Things by their Reason only.

BUT Christians have a Rule, that is put into their Hands, in which those Things that lay hid to the Heathens are laid before their Eyes in open Light, and they ordinarily

narily need nothing more to know the Truth, but to open their Eyes and see, and the Light will immediately direct them in the Discovery of all Things necessary.

AND where Christians are in Darkness under such marvellous Light, tho' in some it may be owing, and very probably is, to an undue Use or Neglect of Reason in the Use of the Scripture; and in others to an undue Use or Neglect of Scripture; yet, in most, it is most probable to suppose, that it may arise from some Weakness they have brought upon their Understandings, or some Cloud or Mist that they have got into, which disables them from seeing and judging clearly.

YOU yourself allow it may be thus: You allow that Reason may be impair'd by Wickedness (p. 45.) and by Idolatry and Superstition, and we all know how it may be darken'd by false Prejudices, and the early Prepossessions of a bad Education and worldly Interest, or by ill Impressions from false Guides, or by too partial a Regard to the Judgment of others, especially if establish'd by Authority.

WHERE this is the Case, 'tis rarely seen that Men can so throughly extricate themselves from this Weight that lies upon their Minds,

Minds, as to be able to see Things in a true and proper Light, so as to form a right Judgment of them.

AND this I verily believe to be the Case of most Christians, whose Errors and Corruptions in Doctrine and Worship are chiefly owing to all, or some one or other of these Causes: So that tho' they have an infallible Rule in their Hands to guide them, and the Light of the Gospel shining round them, which is abundantly sufficient for them; yet all this is render'd ineffectual thro' the Darkness they are under, so that they cannot discern the Truth in many things by reason of *the Blindness of their Hearts.*

To this *Blindness* the Scripture imputes the Errors and Corruptions of the Heathen World before our Saviour came; for as they are said to have been *sometime Darkness*, so our Saviour is said to *have been sent* <sup>2</sup> *to give Light to them that sat in Darkness, and* <sup>3</sup> *to turn them from Darkness to Light:* Nay <sup>4</sup> the Children of *Israel* are said to have had *their Minds blinded by the God of this World, and to have a Veil upon their Heart:* And <sup>5</sup> *as Blindness in part happen'd to Israel,*

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes. v. 8.*      <sup>2</sup> *Luke i. 73.*      <sup>3</sup> *Acts xxvi. 18.*

<sup>4</sup> *2 Cor. iii. 14. & iv. 4.*      <sup>5</sup> *Rom. xi. 25.*

why

why may not Christians fall under the like *Blindness* thro' such Causes, as all the World must own, are naturally apt to create this Effect, even under the most powerful Means of Information?

I HAVE been the longer upon this Head (which is seemingly needless after what I have said before) on purpose to shew you, how little Ground you have to say (p. 19.) *that the Scripture does not suppose that Reason was not a sufficient Guide to Mankind before the Revelation of the Gospel*, and that the Advantage of Christianity does not lie in its greater Sufficiency as a Guide; whereas you plainly here see the contrary: For a Blind Guide is a very Insufficient Guide, yet such is the Reason of the Gentiles said to be: And the State of the Gospel is represented as so much more advantagious than that of meer Reason, that we are required *not to have Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but to walk as Children of Light; not as Fools or dark Heathens, but as wise and enlighten'd Christians.*

AND the Ignorance of their State God is said to have winked at, as being pitiable and excusable in Comparison of that of Christians, from whom God not only expects proper Fruits of Holiness, suitable to the Nature of that Light they enjoy above others,

others, but also such a Proportion and Degree of them, as are suitable to the Measure and Degree of their Light, which plainly implies, that as the Gentiles were Dark and Blind, whilst Christians are enlighten'd by the Gospel, so Christians have so much the greater Advantages than others, and therefore greater things are required of them.

AND here I think it Time to leave this Objection.

I HAVE nothing more to take Notice of, but a short Remark you make, and a false Inference you draw (p. 49.) from a chance Expression of the Bishop's, in which he declares his Sentiments of the Heathens, in their State of Ignorance, as to their Acceptance with God: His Lordship's Words are these, "As to the Heathens, tho' the Light of Reason is but dim, yet they, who have no better Light to walk by, and who honestly make use of that as the only Guide God has given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite Justice and Goodness, p. 46.

Now your Inference is this; If they who have no other Guide but Reason, and honestly make use of that, are sure of finding Mercy with God, &c. what Pretence is

there to argue, that Reason is not sufficient in Matters of Religion ? If Reason is sufficient for obtaining the Divine Favour and Acceptance, which is the End of Virtue and Religion, it is evidently a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.

THIS is your Argument, by which you intend to shew, that, whilst the Bishop is asserting the Insufficiency of Reason of itself to guide us to the Knowledge of all necessary Truth, without some other Aid; in this Declaration he contradicts himself, when he says, that tho' the Heathens could not, thro' the Dimness of the Light they had to walk by, discern all things necessary to be known, (which shews their Reason was not a sufficient Guide) yet God, thro' his Mercy, might be gracious to them, notwithstanding that Insufficiency, if they honestly made Use of the Light they had.

IT must be an uncommon Acuteness to find out where this Contradiction lies: Because God is merciful to a Man on the Account of the Insufficiency of his Reason, and his Sincerity in doing what he is able, does this prove his insufficient Reason to be sufficient ? The Favour God shews in this Case, is owing only to his own Goodness, and not to any thing in Man, but his Sincerity, who, tho' he does not discern all necessary

necessary Truth, yet, as he is Honest and Sincere, God will supply what is wanting by his Grace, by making Allowance for his Ignorance, and accepting his Sincerity, instead of Perfection. And if there be any Inconsistency in this, I own my Reason is not sufficient to discern it: To me this Argument is absurd and fallacious.

THUS have I run thro' your several Objections, at least, all that I think worth Notice, against that most excellent and seasonable Book, that you thought fit to cavil at, and endeavour, as far as you are able, to render useless by your Misrepresentations and fallacious Reasonings. What follows in the remaining Part of your Book, the Bishop is not concern'd in, and it is only a carrying on the same Error, and reasoning upon the same mistaken Bottom, confounding Reason, considered abstractly, for a natural Power, with Reason, as it is in particular Men, and making that to be a Rule and Guide of its self, which is a Rule and Guide to no one, but as it is directed by another, as the Eye is by the Light we walk by.

To answer every thing in it, is only to be tedious in repeating what I have already said: The Fallacies are plain, with the Distinctions I have made, which may easily

be applied, according as Occasion calls for them, and therefore I will not trouble you, nor myself, with any unnecessary Repetitions, but leave you to make your own Use of them.

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